

LAMPS SoCal Missilex 99-1

Off the coast of southern California from 11 to 15 January, the SH-60B *Seahawk* Light Airborne Multi-Purpose System (LAMPS) MK III community tested the armed helo concept. The main objective of the exercise was to conduct tactical evaluations of live fire and air support tactics with upgraded SH-60Bs, equipped with forward-looking infrared pods and Hellfire missile launcher assemblies. These upgrades will allow the *Seahawk's* mission capabilities to be expanded to include marine and littoral combat support.

This groundbreaking exercise was the result of months of planning and training by Helicopter Antisubmarine Squadrons Light 41, 43, 45 and 49, NAS North Island, Calif. Also participating were F/A-18 *Hornets* from the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center (NSAWC), NAS Fallon, Nev., and S-3 *Vikings* from Sea Control Squadron 33, NAS North Island.

Highlights included attacks on a 28-foot foam-filled target boat with three *Seahawk*-fired Hellfire

shots and eight GBU-12 laser guided bombs from F/A-18 *Hornets*. Although the munitions were inert the hits were enough to sink the vessel.

The tactical evaluation conducted during the exercise not only proved the upgraded airframe highly successful but validated many of the strategies in the H-60B armed helo operational tactics guide. In addition to testing documented tactics, many tactical firsts were set, including the first use of LAMPS as an airborne maritime air controller, and its first time working closely with carrier strike aircraft, with the SH-60B directing carrier attack aircraft.

Coordinated exercises such as Missilex 99-1 provide the Navy an opportunity to develop and validate tactics and procedures in a real world environment. These evaluations allow the right assets to be used on the right missions to fully utilize the Navy's strength.





Opposite page, a QST-35 towing vessel brought the QST-33 target into position, bottom, where it received hits from the operation's aircraft, inset. Above, an HSL-49 SH-60B *Seahawk* launches a Hellfire at its target. Right, AW2 Geoff Schwenk of HSL-45 takes a moment for the camera during range clearance ops. Below, an F/A-18A and B from NSAWC, NAS Fallon, Nev., provided tactical support during the exercise.

